

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- ! **Federal Agency Name(s):** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and National Sea Grant College Program (Sea Grant) within Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce
- ! **Funding Opportunity Title:** NMFS - Sea Grant Joint Graduate Fellowship Program in Population Dynamics (Population Dynamics Graduate Fellowship Program)
- ! **Announcement Type:** Initial Announcement
- ! **Funding Opportunity Number:** OAR-SG-2006-2000357
- ! **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number(s):** 11.417, Sea Grant Support
- **Dates:** Applications must be received by 4 p.m.(local time) on February 10th, 2006 by a state Sea Grant Program [or by the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) in the case of an institution of higher education in a non-Sea Grant state]. Applications from the sponsoring Sea Grant program are to be forwarded, unchanged, to the NSGO either through Grants.gov or hardcopy no later than 4 p.m. EST on February 17th, 2006. For applications submitted through Grants.gov APPLY, a date and time receipt indication is included and will be the basis of determining timeliness. Hard copy proposals will be date and time stamped when they are received in the program office.
- ! **Funding Opportunity Description:** The Graduate Fellowship Program awards at least two new PhD fellowships each year to students who are interested in careers related to the population dynamics of living marine resources and the development and implementation of quantitative methods for assessing their status. Fellows will work on thesis problems of public interest and relevance to NMFS under the guidance of NMFS mentors.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Description

The National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) established a new Graduate Fellowship Program in Population Dynamics and Marine Resource Economics (Program) in 1999. The intent of the Program is to award a limited number of fellowships each year to students who are interested in careers related to 1) the population dynamics of living marine resources and the development and implementation of quantitative methods for assessing their status, and 2) the economics of the conservation and management of living marine resources. At least two new fellowships are to be awarded each year in each of the Program=s two disciplines.

This announcement is to solicit applications for fellowships in **Population Dynamics**. There is a parallel and similar announcement soliciting applications for fellowships in Marine Resource Economics.

For the FY 2006 competition now being announced, funds are available to award at least two new fellowships in Population Dynamics.

The goals of the Program are to 1) encourage qualified applicants to pursue careers in population dynamics and stock assessment methodology; 2) increase available expertise related to the population dynamics and assessment of the status of the stocks of living marine resources; 3) foster closer relationships between academic scientists and NMFS; and 4) provide real-world experience to graduate students and accelerate their career development.

The fellowships will provide support for up to three years for highly qualified graduate students working towards a PhD in population dynamics or related fields of study. Continued support after the first year will be contingent upon the availability of Federal funds and satisfactory performance by the Fellow. In addition to his/her faculty adviser, each Fellow will be required to work closely with an expert (mentor) from NMFS who may provide data for the Fellows thesis, and serve on the Fellows committee.

Mentors will be from participating NMFS Science Centers or Laboratories. Each Fellow will be required to pay an extended visit to his/her host NMFS facility. Remuneration for this visit will be part of the annual award. Population Dynamics Fellows will also be expected to spend 10-20 days at sea per year learning about sampling techniques and problems, commercial fishing, fishery biology, and local and regional issues of

importance to fisheries management. Fellows may also work, as necessary, at the participating NMFS facility during some or all of the academic year at the mutual discretion of mentor, faculty advisor, and Fellow.

B. Program Authority

Authority for the Population Dynamics Graduate Fellowship Program is provided by the following: 33 U.S.C. 1127(a).

II. Award Information

The award for each Fellowship, contingent upon the availability of Federal funds, will be a multi-year cooperative agreement in the amount of \$38,000 per year for up to three years. The award will be a cooperative agreement because of substantial involvement by NMFS. This involvement includes serving for 10-20 days aboard a research or commercial vessel during a scientific survey or experimental activity. The Fellow's work will be overseen by a NMFS mentor who will provide advice and guidance. The portion of the award provided to each Fellow for salary (stipend), living expenses (per diem), tuition (unless waived), health insurance and other institution fees, and travel necessary to carry out the proposed thesis research and to attend the Annual Graduate Fellows Seminar each spring will be determined and distributed by the institution in accordance with its guidelines.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Prospective Fellows must be United States citizens. At the time of application, prospective Population Dynamics Fellows must be admitted to a PhD degree program in population dynamics or a related field such as applied mathematics, statistics, or quantitative ecology, at an institution of higher education in the United States or its territories, or submit a signed letter from the institution indicating provisional acceptance to a PhD degree program. Applications must be submitted by the institution of higher education, which may be any such institution in the United States or its territories.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Of the \$38,000 award, 50 percent (\$19,000) will be contributed by NMFS, 33a percent (\$12,667) by the NSGO, and the

balance (\$6,333) by the institution of higher education as the required 50 percent match of NSGO funds.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application information may be found at Grants.gov FIND. It may also be obtained from Sea Grant College Program Directors. The addresses of the Sea Grant College Program directors may be found on Sea Grant's World Wide Web home page (<http://www.seagrant.noaa.gov/other/programsdirectors.html>) or by contacting the NSGO (mail address: National Sea Grant College Program, 1315 East-West Highway, SSMC3, R/SG, Silver Spring, MD 20910; phone: 301-713-2431). Application information may also be obtained directly from the Sea Grant World Wide Web site (<http://www.seagrant.noaa.gov/funding/fisheriesgradfellowship.html>).

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Applications must adhere to the provisions under applications and the nine requirements under Required Elements by the deadline of February 10, 2006 to either the Sea Grant College or to the NSGO. Failure to follow these restrictions will result in applications being rejected without review.

1. Applications

The number of pages in the application must be in accordance with the page limitations specified for certain of the requirements under Required Elements (e.g., project proposal, curriculum vitae, and education and career goal statement).

2. Required Elements

Applications must include the following nine elements:

- a. Signed title page: The title page must identify the prospective Fellow, be signed by the faculty advisor and the institutional representative, and provide complete contact information. The proposal title should include "NMFS - Sea Grant Population Dynamics Graduate Fellowship". The total amount of Federal and matching funds being requested for each project year must be listed.
- b. Project summary: The project summary should concisely describe the activity being proposed and the impact that would

result from its successful completion. Applicants are encouraged to use the Sea Grant Project Summary Form 90-2, but may use their own form as long as it provides the same information as the Sea Grant form. The project summary should include: i. Title: Use the exact title as it appears in the rest of the application; ii. Investigators: List the names and affiliations of each investigator who will significantly contribute to the project, starting with the Principal Investigator. For Sea Grant Fellowships, the faculty advisor or the state Sea Grant Director may be used; iii. Funding request for each year of the Fellowship, including matching funds, if appropriate; iv. Project period: Start and completion dates. Applications for FY 2006 should request a start date of June 1, 2006; v. Project proposal: This should include the rationale for the proposed activity, the scientific or technical objectives and/or hypotheses to be tested, and a brief summary of the work to be completed. The project proposal is intended to be a brief summary of the proposed thesis or the general intended area of study and should not exceed five (5) pages.

c. Budget and budget justification: There should be a separate budget for each year as well as a cumulative annual budget for the entire period of the proposed fellowship. The Sea Grant Budget Form 90-4 should preferably be used, but the institution may use its own form as long as it provides the same information as the Sea Grant form. Sub-contractors, if any, should have a separate budget page. Indirect costs are not allowable for either the fellowship or for any costs associated with the fellowship [15 CFR 917.11(e), Guidelines for Sea Grant Fellowships].

Matching funds equivalent to 50 percent of the NSGO funds must be provided by the Fellow's institution. Allocation of matching funds must be specified in the budget and may consist of up to one/half month salary for the faculty advisor, waived tuition, equipment and supplies, and any other costs typically used as matching funds. In addition to stipend and tuition for the applicant, the budget should include funds for equipment, supplies, and travel (see Award Information above).

d. Curriculum vitae of the student, the faculty advisor, and the NMFS mentor (2-page maximum per investigator).

e. Signed letter of commitment from the prospective NMFS mentor.

f. Copies of all undergraduate and graduate student transcripts.

g. Education and career goal statement [not to exceed two (2) pages] from the student indicating the number of years for which fellowship support is being sought and the student's interest in marine population dynamics or the development and

implementation of quantitative methods for assessing stock status of living marine resources.

h. Three signed letters of recommendation, including one from the student's faculty advisor.

i. Proof of acceptance (or provisional acceptance), and enrollment in a graduate program in population dynamics or related fields of study.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be received by 4 p.m. (local time) on February 10, 2006, by a state Sea Grant Program [or by the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) if the application is from an institution of higher education in a non-Sea Grant state]. Applications received by a state Sea Grant program are to be forwarded, unchanged, to the NSGO and received no later than 4 pm EST on February 17, 2006. For applications submitted through Grants.gov APPLY, a date and time receipt indication is included and will be the basis of determining timeliness. Hard copy proposals will be date and time stamped when they are received in the program office. Hard copy applications arriving after the closing dates given above will be accepted for review only if the applicant can document that the application was provided to a delivery service that guaranteed delivery prior to the specified closing date and time. In any event, hard copy applications received by the NSGO later than two business days following the closing date will not be accepted.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.

E. Funding Restrictions

Indirect costs are not allowable for either the fellowship or for any costs associated with the fellowship [15 CFR 917.11(e), "Guidelines for Sea Grant Fellowships"].

F. Other Submission Requirements

Applications from Sea Grant programs should be submitted through www.Grants.gov, unless an applicant does not have internet access. In that case, hard copy may be submitted to the NSGO and should be addressed to: National Sea Grant Office, R/SG, Attn: Fellowship Program Manager, Room 11718,

NOAA, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (telephone number for express mail applications is 301-713-2431). *Facsimile transmissions and electronic mail submission of applications will not be accepted.*

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria and weighting of the criteria are as follows:

1. Academic record and statement of career goals of student. For the NMFS-Sea Grant Joint Graduate Fellowship Program in Population Dynamics the academic record in the quantitative area is particularly important as is the Statement of Education and Career Goals. (35 percent)

2. Quality of and applicability to program priorities. For the NMFS-Sea Grant Joint Graduate Fellowship Program in Population Dynamics the Project Summary should provide evidence of important and innovative research and relate that research to relevant agency priorities. (30 percent)

3. Recommendations and/or endorsements of student. For the NMFS-Sea Grant Joint Graduate Fellowship Program in Population Dynamics the expertise of major professor and proposed NMFS mentor will be taken into account. (20 percent)

4. Additional relevant experience related to diversity of education; extra-curricular activities; honors and awards; interpersonal, written, and oral communications skills. For the NMFS-Sea Grant Joint Graduate Fellowship Program in Population Dynamics the applicant's background, relevant experience and evidence of effective communication skills are important. (15 percent)

5. Financial need of student. The NMFS-Sea Grant Joint Graduate Fellowship Program does not use this criterion. (0 percent).

B. Review and Selection Process

An initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. Applications will be individually ranked in accordance with the above criteria and assigned weights by an independent review panel consisting of government and academic experts. Panel members will provide individual evaluations of each applicant, and their ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the applications. The selecting official shall award

in the rank order unless the application is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon any of the selection factors provided below. The selecting official shall make final recommendations for award to the Grants officer who is authorized to obligate the funds and execute the award.

C. Selection Factors

The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based on any of the following factors:

1. Balance/Distribution of funds:
 - a. Across academic disciplines
 - b. By types of institutions
 - c. Geographically
2. Availability of funds
3. Program-specific objectives
4. Degree in scientific area and type of degree sought

For Factor 1.c., priority will be given to NMFS Fisheries Science Centers that may not currently have any Graduate Fellows. For Factor 3, program-specific objectives are in Section I.A. Program Description, above.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, funds are expected to be awarded by approximately June 1, 2006, the start date that should be used on the Application for Federal Assistance (Form 424) for successful applications.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

The notice of award is signed by the NOAA Grants Officer and is the authorizing document. The NSGO will notify each unsuccessful applicant by informing the state Sea Grant Program through which the application was submitted in writing, via e-mail, and by providing a written summary, via e-mail, of the comments given by the review panel. The state Sea Grant Programs will, in turn, formally notify each unsuccessful applicant and forward the summary comments provided by the NSGO. The applications that are not ultimately selected for funding will be destroyed.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Department of Commerce Requirements. Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in the Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements published in the Federal Register on December 30, 2004 (69 FR 78389). You may obtain a copy of these notices by contacting the agency contact(s) under Section VII, or by going to the website at: www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces140.html.

Limitation of Liability. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to provide special fishing privileges.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA): NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216--6--TOC.pdf>, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm.

Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required.

Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an

application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

C. Reporting

All financial and progress reports may be required to be submitted either electronically or in hard copy. Financial reports are to be submitted to the NOAA Grants Officer and performance reports (summary of accomplishments and activities) are to be submitted to the NOAA Sea Grant Fellowship Program Manager. Fellows will be expected to present a review of the progress on their research during the Annual Graduate Fellows Seminar held each spring. Financial reports are semi-annual and performance reports are annual.

VII. Agency Contact(s)

Contact Fellowship Manager, National Sea Grant College Program, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910; tel: (301) 713-2431.

VIII. Other Information

Sea Grant Program information collection and reporting requirements in this notice are authorized by the Office of Management and Budget under Control No. 0648-0362.